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Statement submitted by the Dominican Leadership Conference and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

People on the move: a need to include them where they are

1. There are an estimated 200 million external migrants, 16 million refugees and asylum-seekers and 26 million internally displaced persons who constitute some of the groups that have moved for work or for reasons of safety, or as a result of poverty, conflict or climate change. There is virtually no country that is unaffected by human migration. Leaving a marginal existence in countries of origin, migrants move to improve their lives by integrating themselves into a new society in the countries of destination, which most often benefit from migrants' contributions. Migrants are often disappointed when they are marginalized yet again.

2. Migration can be a rich source of cultural sharing, a source of development for the countries of origin (owing to remittances) and a rich source of labour and cultural exchange for receiving countries whose populations are ageing. When efforts are made to integrate migrants into the communities in which they live and work, everyone benefits.

3. However, where external migrants are criminalized by legislation which does not conform to the current reality of labour needs, there results increasing xenophobia. Xenophobia leads host country communities to alienate newcomers. Increased numbers of migrants moving internally puts pressure on urban areas. As it is difficult to absorb large numbers of people in already well-populated city centres, these newcomers also experience alienation and discrimination.

4. Cross-cutting issues such as gender, organized crime, climate change and the financial, food and fuel crises make it clear that migration can no longer be ignored. To do so would place societies in great peril and would constitute an egregious violation of human rights. Indeed, both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly articles 13, 14 and 15, as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, place migration within the context of human rights. When migrants' rights are honoured, they are free to contribute to the communities of which they are a part.

Systemic causes of migration

5. A decision to migrate almost always implies the inability of a society or Government to provide for its people; migration is often not a freely made decision at all. Migration occurs where people feel forced to flee from something — armed conflict, genocide or crimes against humanity/human rights violations — or as a result of the inability to feed one's family owing to rising food prices, food shortages or climate-change-induced agricultural disasters or the inability to provide for the health and well-being of one's family. In short, society/government has failed in its responsibility to provide an enabling and inclusive environment for significant numbers of its members.

6. Poverty is the leading cause of migration worldwide. With the global financial crisis causing many to fall back into ever deeper poverty, worldwide migration patterns are expected to expand.

7. Many other factors result in people leaving their homes. Environmental refugees flee from disasters caused by climate change. Some migrants are recruited to fill jobs in other countries, either because the jobs are unwanted by host country

workers or because the host country's demographics (for example, ageing population, low fertility rates) require an influx of workers.

8. In all cases, whether they move within their own borders or internationally, migrants are frequently met with extreme forms of social exclusion and marginalization. Large groups of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (education, housing, employment, health care and democratic participation) that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration.

Social inclusion

9. Dignity and justice for each and every human being is the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Wherever people live and in whatever sort of society, one of their basic rights is to be allowed to take part in full in the life of their community. While the reality of migration makes this extremely challenging, it is nonetheless important and possible. Participation means that the voices of migrants who are so often excluded need to be heard and heeded, not silenced by "borders".

10. The planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies by all segments of society, including migrants, are essential to any integral process of social inclusion. To be deprived of this level of participation is, literally, to become "nameless" and lost to society. As a consequence, the society is deprived of the rich contributions new groups of people have to offer to its own ongoing development.

11. It is therefore incumbent on the host country to address barriers such as cultural distinctions, racism, the need for language acquisition and other educational issues, so that new migrants cannot only be aware of and assert their human rights, but also contribute to their new communities. It is clear that the protection of migrants' rights will enhance the development gains to be reaped from migration. To quote Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Respect for migrants' rights actually contributes to economic and social development in sending and receiving countries. Migrants who have opportunities for decent and legal work contribute more to development than those who are exploited".[1]

12. Two of the most essential elements in enabling people to lift themselves out of poverty and in advancing the overall development goals of any country, be it a sending or receiving country, are decent work and basic education. Serious investment in these would both reduce the conditions which force people to migrate and enhance their contributions to whatever society they find themselves in.

13. Individuals and non-governmental organizations often reach out to assist migrants with their many needs. A practical way to foster their greater inclusion in the host communities would be to sponsor inter-agency meetings, perhaps on a quarterly basis. These would offer an opportunity for all organizations serving the residents in a particular area to come together to share information; to plan community gatherings for the well-being of the entire community — newcomers, as well as long-standing residents; and to analyse community needs with the residents,

[1] See *International Migration and Human Rights*, Global Migration Group, October 2008, p. 80, available at www.globalmigrationgroup.org.

thereby fostering a sense of participation and working together for the common good.

Recommendations for Governments

- Since poverty is one of the leading causes of migration, Governments need to address systemic causes of migration by eliminating discriminatory trade and economic policies, agricultural subsidies and onerous debt conditionalities. These are counterproductive to poverty reduction and sustainable development and undermine economic stability, thus exacerbating outward migration. Honouring official development assistance commitments is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This would alleviate the need to migrate.
- To fulfil their responsibility to ensure that migrants' rights are protected, Governments should enforce the monitoring of procedures and practices of departments responsible for immigration and law enforcement and social welfare agencies, against the benchmarks of human rights law, international conventions and national laws. Continuing the task of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the issue of documentation for work would reduce the criminalization of migrants and the increasing tendency to xenophobia.
- In order to promote the decent work agenda, Governments also need to provide for the supervision of fair working and living conditions and working hours for migrants and endure the provision of safety devices, including compensation for injuries and the payment of just wages. This will free migrants to actively participate in community decision-making for the common good of all.
- Governments need to ensure the necessary budget allocations to assist education departments and non-governmental organizations in creating or enhancing already existing programmes for the following:
  - In-school acquisition of the host country language for migrant children
  - Adult education language acquisition programmes for men and women for social interchange, as well as for the workplace
  - Intercultural programmes which foster the mutual appreciation by both the newcomers and local residents of the richness of one another's traditions and customs.

Note: Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Franciscans International, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Partnership for Global Justice, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Sisters of Charity Federation, UNANIMA International.